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CIA Director William Casey — who earlier that day had retracted a threat to sue certain newspapers, including this one, for printing supposed intelligence secrets — backed away from the question: What was your worst moment ever in dealing with the press?

"I can't answer that," he said at Thursday's book party for Peter Hannaford's "Talking Back To the Media." Mr. Casey did say his main criticism of the press was "journalists' superficiality."

Well, the answers given by other political and public relations figures at the party were pretty superficial, too. To judge by their replies, none have been bested by the press and therefore need never look at their friend's book, a guide to handling the fourth estate.

Richard Allen, former national security adviser, did mention the time when "a reporter tried to interview my 6-year-old daughter on her way to school" and can still remember "[NBC's] Andrea Mitchell chasing me up and down stairs with a camera."

Mr. Hannaford said he couldn't

'Talking Back' and enjoying it

think of his worst moment.

"This is the pre-Deaver crowd," observed Columbus Dispatch bureau chief **George Embrey**, "the people who were with Hannaford in California."

(Michael Deaver wasn't invited to the party, although he and Mr. Hannaford were once business partners who helped run Ronald Reagan's gubernatorial campaigns. Mr. Hannaford is now president of his own public relations firm.)

"Just never lie" was the first rule **Bess Abell** said she learned as daughter of a Kentucky governor. Mrs. Abell recalled how her mother once ducked a reporter's question about whether her father was at home by saying, "He's not in the

house." Technically honest: The governor's wife had just instructed her husband to wait out the phone call on the porch.

Columnist **Jules Witcover** said White House Chief of Staff Donald T. Regan was his candidate for the book's ideal reader, "because he constantly says things that get him in hot water."

"Somebody," he explained, "asked him a question about nuclear safety. It concerned an unlicensed nuclear power plant at Shoreham, Long Island, and why nobody could agree on an adequate evacuation of Long Island, should a similar event to Chernobyl occur."

"Regan said, 'You can't get off Long Island, whether there is a disaster or not.'"

Also at the party were Deputy Secretary of Commerce **Clarence J. Brown**, White House Press Secretary **Jim Brady**, Washingtonian magazine's **Diana McLellan**, Facts on File president **Howard Epstein**, columnist and TV show host **John McLaughlin**, and former White House curator **Clement E. Conger**.

— Ann Geracimos



Richard Allen, William Casey, Peter Hannaford